MUSICAL INTERPRETATION

SECTION I

INTRODUCTORY

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

THE teaching of Interpretation is so complex a problem that at a first glance it seems hopeless to try to cover the ground in one or two short lectures. All one can do is to select some few of the more salient points, points in regard to which the young teacher or performer (and often the older one) is most apt to fail. This then, is what I propose doing, it being understood that no attempt is here made to treat the subject exhaustively.

The main points I have selected are:

(1) The difference between Practice and mere Strumming.
(2) The difference between Teaching and Cramming.
(3) How one's mind can be brought to bear upon one's work.
(4) Correct ideas of Time and Shape.
(5) The element of Rubato and its application.
(6) The elements of Duration and Pedalling and their application.
(7) Incidentally, some details as to the application of the element of Tone-variety.

General attitude of teacher.

It is impossible, however, to make clear even these particular essentials of teaching, without first taking a cursory glance *at the whole problem* — the *general attitude* of the teacher towards those he wishes to help. To begin with, let us recognise the fact, that, accurately speaking, we cannot "teach" anyone anything — in the sense of our being able *directly to lodge* any knowledge of ours in another mind.

The learner can only be helped to learn.

All we can really do is to stimulate another mind *to wish to learn*, and suggestively to place before that other mind the things which it is desirable should be apprehended. It is always the other mind which has to make the effort to apprehend, and unless that effort *is* made nothing can be learnt.

We cannot teach others, but we *can help them* to learn. In fact, I will go so far as to say that unless we teachers do recognise this fundamental truth, we cannot hope to begin to succeed in our vocation. We shall also see that one of the very points I wish to insist upon is closely allied to this truth. Let me at once state it here:

The first law of teaching.

Good teaching consists not in trying to make the pupil *do things* so that the result of his efforts shall *seem* like playing, but consists in trying to make him *think*, so that it shall *really* be playing.

The good teacher does not try to turn his pupil into an automaton, but tries to prompt him to grow into a living, intelligent being. But more of this anon.[1]

[1] As I shall explain later, the fallacious attitude is to endeavour to use *our* will and intelligence so that the doings of our pupil's fingers may sound plausible, whereas the correct attitude is to use our intelligence so that the pupil will all the time use *his* own intelligence and *his* own will, and may thus learn to guide his fingers correctly, alike musically, and technically.

Undoubtedly, one of the first things we have to combat in a pupil is the wish to be saved all trouble and effort, and to have the "learning" done by the teacher. Indeed, the ordinary pupil invariably starts with the notion, that all he has to do is to be passive and "receptive" — like a laboratory funnel with mouth widely gaping, ready to receive any chemicals (pleasant or otherwise) which the operating chemist may see fit to pour in. This attitude must be at once kindly but firmly combated, and the pupil must be made to see, that it is for *him* to try to learn, for him to try to apprehend and to assimilate those things to which the teacher is anxious to call his attention.

The most usual fault of the student.

Certainly, there are direct and there are indirect (or empirical) methods of teaching in all branches of education; and, as you know, I claim that my teaching-methods *are* direct — but we now see that this "directness" can refer solely *to the method of placing things* before a pupil.

The first general conclusion we are thus driven to accept is the need for purposeful brain-use, on the part of both teacher and pupil. With regard to the pupil, not only is brain-use (i.e. reasoning) imperative during lesson-time, it is even more imperative during the practice-hour when there is no help available from outside. How often indeed do we find the pupil's work brought back worse than at a preceding lesson, in spite of what would seem to have been most judiciously thought-out and carefully worded advice! And why is this so? Simply, because the pupil in the interval, instead of really practising, has tried with might and main to make himself (or herself) into an automatic *strumming-machine*. Yes, often it is the pupil's fault, he either will not, or cannot use his brains.

Both teacher and pupil must learn to think.

But believe me, far more often still, it is the teacher's fault, owing to his not having correctly *shown* the student *how*

to use his brains during practice, or not having diplomatically enough insisted on real practice, in place of such mere gymnastic strumming.

How to practise.

The first thing to do then, is to give the pupil a clear idea of what does constitute real practice.[1]

The danger of automaticity.

Remember that the mistaken desideratum with which the student starts work is just this, it seems to him that the ideal state would be to be able to do *without thinking*. Often enough he does try his utmost to exercise his muscles in his pieces, his studies and techniques — and he does so, believing piano-playing to be a purely gymnastic pursuit like walking and running, etc. Even admitting the necessity for muscular automaticity, he does not realise that a certain amount of reflection is imperative in acquiring it; that walking, running, and breathing, purely automatic as they must be *in the end*, are all the better for a little reflection on the right ways of doing them.[2]

The average student then, if left to himself, will assuredly try to make himself into a mere automaton in his practice-hour, from sheer horror of the discomfort and irksomeness of *mental* effort.

Therefore, this is the first and ever-present obstacle with which we teachers have to contend. We must be prepared to drive home to the pupil that the thing *most to be avoided* is this very automaticity which seems so attractive to him,

[1] Realise, that the average student has a fixed idea that Piano-practice is a purely gymnastic exercise — he lives in the hope that by going over the ground often enough, the piece may at last "do itself" *without his thinking about it at all* — a mere exercising therefore of the muscles concerned.

[2] Even the athlete must use his judgement, and those who are too lazy or decadent to do their athletics personally must still give their minds to the exhibited exercise, if they mean to derive any interest from it.

and into which his natural bent will only too assuredly lead him. We may use persuasion or threats, coaxing or snarling, sledge hammer or velvet paw upon him, but if any good work is to be done, we must in some way or other bring him to avoid automatic practice.

The danger of not really listening.

Really, there is nothing more fatal for our musical sense, than to allow ourselves — by the hour — to *hear* musical sounds without really *listening* to them; and this holds true whether the sounds are made by ourselves or by others; for unless we do listen *attentively*, we are at that moment inevitably forming habits of lax attention.[1]

Listening defined.

Here I must digress for a moment, to make plainer what is meant by "really listening," for we cannot get any further unless we are quite clear on this point. Let us, for instance, take a page of print or music. If we turn our eyes upon it, the light from the page pours in upon us, whether we attend to its meaning or not. We may realise that it is

Automatic practice, useless, even for techniques.

[1] To sound the notes of a piece through as a mere physical exercise, is not only useless but positively harmful musically; and this applies as much to the practice of Studies and Techniques as to that of pieces, for in all repetitions we are always forming or fixing habits — musical ones and technical ones — and it behoves us therefore to see to it that good habits and not bad ones are being insisted upon — habits of keen attention, for instance, and not habits of laxity of attention. It must be constantly insisted upon, that if we try to make the piece, or study, or technical exercise "go by itself," this, so far from being "practice" is indeed the opposite — it is *un-practice*. For in trying to turn ourselves into human automata we are doing all we can to render it impossible for us to acquire those habits of mind — of attention — which enable us to play with success; and we shall, in the end, find our *head* listening merely to the doings of our *spine!* And this is no mere figure of speech, for it describes quite accurately what does occur in such cases; that is, we here have the conscious, *could-be* intelligent brain engaged in merely noticing (instead of directing) the clockwork doings of our spinal or ganglionic centres!

a page of print, we may even read it out aloud, but it conveys no definite meaning until we do bring our minds upon it. We derive no information from the constant stream of varied light-impressions pouring in through the iris *unless we analyse the impressions* made on our nerve-ends; unless we (consciously or unconsciously) investigate the impressions there received, we notice nothing, learn nothing, and do not really see *anything*.[1]

Precisely so is it with our ears, I might say it is even more so, for we cannot shut our physical ears as we can our eyes. All sounds that occur within earshot will certainly reach our ear-drums and the nerve-ends of the inner ear, whether we "listen" or not. But we may derive from this stream of sounds either a mere vague impression that *some sort* of sound is occurring, or we may, if we turn our minds upon the sound, discover definitely *what* it consists of and means.

We do not really see or hear unless we analyse.

We may, even without attention, realise the fact that some music is being made, but we shall certainly not understand a note of it, unless we do purposely, all the time, notice and in fact *analyse* the stream of aural-impressions pouring in upon us.

[1] An excellent experiment is, to turn our eyes upon a window covered by a light, diaphanous, gauzy curtain. We shall find, while keeping our eyes quite stationary, that we can allow ourselves to become conscious *either* of the pattern of the curtain, or of the trees or other objects outside the window. True, a slight focussing adjustment of the iris-muscles occurs in this case, but the main, important fact taught us is, that we may either notice the curtain itself or the things beyond it at will. Which of the two we do thus observe depends upon the direction we give to our powers of mental-analysis. Moreover, the things we do not thus analyse we also do not observe — and this, although the light rays do pour in upon us all the time, both from the curtain and from the objects beyond it!

No one is quite so foolish as to try to write or draw without at least taking the trouble to *look* at the paper he is engaged upon. Nevertheless, most music-students fail to realise that it is just as idiotic to try to play any musical instrument without at least taking the trouble accurately to listen to it — all the time.[1]

As to ear-training, good and bad

Yes, that is where "Ear-training" comes in. But how much rubbish is written and talked in this cause — a most righteous cause, when really understood and not perverted into faddism. It would seem that many people imagine "Ear-training" to be a process of actually training a portion of one's brain (previously otherwise employed) to be impressed by sounds, or a training of the nerve-ends of the ear-organ itself! Or, perhaps even, a training of the skin and flesh itself — the lobes of the outer ear!

[1] This is one of the greatest difficulties the teacher has to contend with The average pupil does not in the least realise that he must bring his aural consciousness on the work in hand; neither will he take the trouble to judge what he should do, nor how he should do it, nor will he deign to listen to the *actual sounds* he is making. Yet when he writes his own name he takes care to "listen with his eyes" on the paper! And even with the best intention to listen and attend properly, the student is apt to fail. You must explain to him therefore that listening does not mean merely hearing what the automatic centres may manage to do, but that effective listening implies *pre*-listening all the time as to what *should be*. Explain to him that he must certainly listen to all he is doing — every note, but in the first place he must *want* every note aright. Say to him "do want all the time — every note." Be not taken up with the doing, but on the contrary "let Music tell you what to do" — let the piece, as it goes along, suggest to you what to do; then you may be sure that you are using your Imagination as well as your Reason. When the music seems to *tell* you what to do, then are you using your sub-conscious faculties as you should do eventually.

In short: during Practice do not try to "do," but try to *learn to see;* during Performance you may then be able to see Music — its Shape, Feeling and Time-spot, while you compel your fingers to give all this.

Granted, that training may possibly help to sensitise the actual ear-*machine* or apparatus — granted, also, that there may be a portion of our brain-matter more particularly engaged in aural work — the main point remains, and that is, that all ear-training in the first place signifies Mind-training: training ourselves to *observe* and *notice aural impressions*, training our mind to make use of the impressions received through our ear-apparatus. In short, Ear-training to be practical, must mean Mind-training, musically. Certainly, we should teach children Ear-attention from the very beginning, and from the simplest steps upwards.

But what is generally overlooked is, that every one professing to teach any form of musical performance must insist on such real Ear-training all day and every minute of every day when engaged in teaching — if it is to be real teaching at all.[1]

Definition of real practice.

A passage must therefore never be played through, no, not even once through, except for the express purpose of really *knowing* that passage better; for the purpose of knowing it better not only physically but also mentally — knowing each bar better and the piece as a Whole better. Firstly, that we may know it better *as to its musical content* — both as to Shape and as to Feeling; and secondly, that

[1] Under the new faddism, I have heard of good teachers being turned out of schools on the ground that they, personally, have not acquired some particular stage of ear-discrimination, while no enquiry was made whether they were successful or not in making their pupils use their minds aurally. That the teacher possesses "absolute pitch" (relative pitch is another matter!) is no guarantee whatever that the possessor is in the least musical or observant aurally, or knows how to make others observant.

To insist on such a test is sheer folly. What should be insisted upon is, that the would-be teacher knows how to make *his pupils* use their own ears.

we may know it better *technically* — which means, that each playing through of it may help us to realise better *what to do physically*, and what to *avoid doing* physically at the keyboard.[1]

All this implies a constant process of analysis — of minute analysis as to what should be done and what *is* being done *musically* — and also, what should be done and is being done *technically*.

Constant process of analysis proved necessary.

Moreover, this again presupposes a high degree of concentration of mind on the part of the pupil, and that precisely *is* the requirement — full concentration of mind is needed. Now, it is the teacher's very first duty (and constant duty) to prompt the pupil in this direction.

True, such concentration may come almost "naturally" to the few possessors of that concatenation of various talents which the public loosely gathers up into the term *genius;* and if we do possess this so-called "genius," then

"Genius" implies natural concentration on one's work.

[1] Indeed, there is no practice worthy the name unless we are all the while really *studying;* studying (or *analysing*) with a most lavish, but carefully directed expenditure of thought and reasoning — and not one single note played without such expenditure. But a warning is also necessary here. From sheer wish to do right one may err. One may mistake *caution* for care. To be cautious — to be *afraid* of failing — will only chill one musically, and thus cause one to fail.

Practice implies study.

To be *afraid* of failure does not constitute a care for Music at all; on the contrary, it is again a form of selfishness, and as such must therefore cause failure. To succeed in art as in anything else we must be "unselfish," — so far as that is possible to us humans — we must throw self overboard, and really *caring for art*, we must wish to do well because art is so beautiful, so worthy, that any service we can bring to its shrine is as nothing. Thus we shall indeed take trouble, we shall be as keenly alert as lies within our power, not for the sake of our own aggrandisement, but for the sake of making the Beautiful attain to its highest possible perfection; and our "carefulness" will thus, so far from chilling us, stimulate us musically to ever increasingly effective efforts.

we may possibly succeed in giving such close attention without apparent effort, for the simple reason, that our bias towards Music is so extreme, and Music is such a keen delight to us, such a matter of life-and-death, that it is easy for us to be in this required state of keen engrossment, even, maybe, without much prompting from the teacher. But the teacher must ever be alert in such rare cases — for even a genius, we find, has frequent lapses of attention!

By learning concentration we can all approximate to the genius level.

Now it also follows, that although our pupils may not all happen to be such "geniuses," we shall be able to bring them considerably nearer the genius-status if we can but manage to cultivate in them *this habit of close attention.* Anyway, to the extent that we do succeed in thus improving their powers of musical attention or concentration, to that extent they will certainly be *more musical* — and that is the point of the argument.

Not only concentration but imagination necessary.

Please do not misunderstand me to maintain that such power of absolute attention is the attribute which, alone, constitutes genius. Far from it! To concentration we must add *vividness of imagination.* Here, indeed, we have the most salient feature of genius and of real talent—Imagination, the ability keenly to visualise, or auralise things apart from their actual physical happening outside of us.

The imaginative power must be trained.

This more subtle faculty, imaginativeness — this power of *pre-hearing* — can also be cultivated in far greater measure than is generally suspected to be possible. Obviously this also is a task which the teacher must set himself to undertake, and must succeed in to some extent, if his pupils are to provide any real pleasure to their listeners.

Again, since it is clear that good practice implies a constant process of analysis, it must be still more clear that teaching implies the same process, persistently and unremittingly applied.

Now, in teaching, analysis implies (broadly speaking) analysis in four distinct ways:

The forms of analysis necessary in teaching.

Firstly, we must analyse WHAT THE PUPIL IS ACTUALLY DOING.

Secondly, we must analyse THE FAULTS THEREBY PERCEIVED.

Thirdly, we must analyse WHY THE PUPIL IS MAKING THOSE FAULTS; and

Lastly, we must analyse THE PUPIL'S ATTITUDE OF MIND, so that we may know how to treat him.

But before we can form any judgement at all, we ourselves must *know* the Music we wish to teach — *we* must have analysed that.

To be explicit on these four points:

Firstly: — We cannot become aware of all there is to be corrected, of all the faults made — and the good points made — unless we constantly analyse the impressions received from the pupil's performance; and this is what is implied by saying that the teacher must "really listen" all the while.[1]

Secondly: — The actual faults thus perceived (through such close listening) we must again analyse, so that we shall be able to diagnose them; for it is impossible to correct a fault *directly* or with certainty, unless it has been in the first place allocated either as a musical fault or as a muscular fault, or as one of laxity of attention, etc.

[1] Not listening, but merely hearing a performance, is just as useless in teaching as it is when examining, or learning, or practising. As I have already said, it is not enough merely to "hear," we must really listen, and plainly that means that we must all the while (to the best of our capacity) ANALYSE all we hear.

Thirdly: — We must analyse the particular pupil's *mental attitude* in making the fault, so that the fault-making may be corrected at its very root. For again, the fault may have arisen, for instance, either from inattention at the moment or inattention during practice; or its cause may be traced to bad habits muscularly, etc.

And here, especially, do not let us forget always to insist that all corrections, whatever their nature, must always be made strictly subservient to the *musical* effects required at the moment; else we shall only provoke self-consciousness in place of the desired correction. For instance, a muscular fault must never be corrected *as such*, but its musical bearing must always be kept before the pupil in each and every case.

Finally: — We must all the time closely analyse the pupil's *general mental attitude*, so that we may be able to judge how best to appeal to him (or impress him) so that our advice may be received sufficiently seriously as to lead to its being followed.

The use of example.

While I thus insist that both teacher and pupil must constantly apply the analytical faculty, while I insist that reasons and causes must constantly be made clear to the pupil (musically and technically) nevertheless I do *not* maintain that actual Example, in the form of playing, is to be contemned. On the contrary, Example is most helpful *when given in conjunction with explanation*, especially with those who have the imitative gift strongly marked, or who can really feel Music keenly. Often, also, as a last resort, it has excellent effect.

The mistake is to rely *entirely* upon Example. This can lead only to subsequent disappointment, and with many pupils even to disaster, for the tendency, here again, is to

turn the pupil into an automatic machine, totally wanting in initiative and in the where-with-all to acquire self-reliance.

The artist as teacher.

Here we see the reason why the public artist is, as a rule, so futile as a teacher — futile for the ordinary student, since only the extremely gifted can learn anything whatever from him. Such artist, as a rule, has usually not the remotest notion *how* or *why* he does anything. Nor does he wish to know; and he therefore has to rely in teaching solely and entirely on this precarious device of exemplification.

If he ever did reason while learning, long ago has he forgotten the process of learning. In fact, nothing is more antipathetic to such artist, usually, than to be asked to reason upon anything. . . . Long habit has indeed made it seem to him that his own doings have "come naturally" to him and have *not* been learnt, and must *not* be taught — in the way one has to learn everything else in life. In fact, that it is a sort of sacrilege, ever to want to know or to investigate the *being* of Art, and that all that anyone should ever venture to do, is to listen reverently and without question to his — the artist's — supposed, God-given messages![1]

For the ordinary student to derive any profit from any such exhibition of what may possibly happen to be quite correct "doing," however, it is evident that it is he *himself*, who will have to do all the reasoning and analysing unless the processes are explained to him by some other teacher.

The informative and non-informative types of mind.

[1] One can in fact divide minds into two distinct types, the *informative* and the *non-informative*, in the sense of either wanting-to-know or *not* wanting-to-know. I fear the artist is too often of the last-named type; he likes to feel and enjoy, but he loathes the troublesome process of learning to understand the working of his own machinery. His gorge usually rises when there is any question of building-up or analysing anything in his art hence also the few BEETHOVENS, BACHS, and truly great artists — and teachers! It is indeed a surprise and a delight to find occasional exceptions to this rule.

True, the student, if gifted with extreme musical sensitiveness, may succeed in a measure in giving a photograph of what he has heard, but even then it will probably be but a pale or distorted version.

Such a great artist as *Liszt*, for instance, undoubtedly did have an overwhelming influence, musically, on all who came into contact with him. Nevertheless, he was *not* a real "teacher" at all, in the strict sense in which the term is here used — although he was truly a great SEER. Indeed, I doubt very much whether Liszt himself ever gave a single, real "lesson" in his life. What he did often do, with his overwhelming enthusiasm and wonderful personality, was to stimulate an incipient, latent, and perhaps lukewarm enthusiasm into a blazing flame.

A teacher must be artistic.

Nevertheless, while the artist is thus as a rule the most feeble of teachers, no teacher on the other hand is worthy the name unless he, himself, is also more or less an artist — and a finely perceptive one, too! To be a really good teacher, you must therefore possess, or at least you must have possessed a technique sufficiently ample to enable you to give due expression to the artistic feeling which you must have succeeded in cultivating in yourself. So that, besides *really* teaching (i.e., explaining and showing), you may also be able to stir artistic fire and enthusiasm in others by actual example, when necessary. Only then can you help your pupils in every way.

Why example, unaided, will not suffice.

As to the appeal solely to the imitative faculty, it is clear enough why this so often leads the pupil astray — often into sheer musical perversion; for indeed, a high degree of nice judgement is needed to perceive *what* it is that renders a musical performance good, or the reverse — to perceive what is essential and what is unessential. How can such nicety of judgement be expected from a mere School-

student, seeing that it is this very thing you have to teach him? Indeed, he would require no teacher, did he already possess such power of judgement and of analysis.

Not possessing such highly cultivated power of observation or judgement, the student is almost bound to be captivated by some of the more prominent means of expression which you happen to employ in exemplifying to him, or possibly by some details of expression merely differing from those he has used. It is these which he will try to reproduce — with the best of intentions no doubt — but with the consequence that the picture will be quite out of focus, out of drawing, a picture probably much worse than it was before he tried to imitate that example which you gave him — remember, an example given *without explanation*, without the purpose and reason explained to him in so many words.[1]

Example v., explanation.

Let us now consider what happens if we merely play through a passage to a pupil *without explanation.* I will play the opening bars of Schumann's "Warum" with the inflections of time and tone more or less correctly given, thus:

EXAMPLE 1.[2]



[1] We must never forget the fact that the most difficult problem for the pupil is to keep the picture in mind *as a whole* — as a continuous progression — and not to allow the *necessary* attention to each detail, as it comes along, to distract him from a persistent purpose to keep Shape and Outline perfectly clear.

[2] These time-inflections must be applied very subtly — not in a way so coarse as to call attention to themselves.

Without explanation given to him, the pupil will try to imitate the "means" — the expression-effects — he thinks he has heard me employ, and the result will probably be a frightful parody, with blind and futile changes of time and tone, such as the amateur who wishes to appear "musical" loves to make, something like this:

EXAMPLE 2.



But I shall obtain quite another result from the pupil, if I take the precaution thoroughly to *explain* the passage to him, either before playing it, or afterwards. For instance, I must first make the pupil *scan* the phrase correctly, so that he may understand its rhythmical structure — where its culminating point is, rhythmically, where "it goes to." Again, I must show him, that in music such as this, unless I bend or inflect the *time* as well as the tone (unless I give proper RUBATO to it) only squareness will result; and I must even point out exactly *how* the time is to be curved — *where* I must waste time to give emphasis, and *where* I must hasten the time so as to swing the rhythm back to the point where the phrase reaches its little climax, and in the meantime, and beyond all this, I must endeavour to convey to him its *emotional import*, either by gesture or word. In this way, and in this way only, the pupil will be made to understand *why* he must use the particular expression-means I used

in exemplifying, and he will then also be able to use such musical sense as he has to guide him to the required *proper proportions.*

The result will now be a *real* performance, one prompted by his own mind in the right way. Moreover, it will display his own individuality, and it will be satisfactory, just because one can perceive in hearing it, that it is guided by the performer's *own* intelligence.

Furthermore, the pupil will also have made a step forward in his general knowledge of playing — a permanent step forward. Or, at all events, he will have had the opportunity of making it, provided his memory is good enough — for he will have had a lesson in *learning to analyse* and to apply means to an end.

Necessity of enthusiasm.

There remains to be referred to, one more *general* characteristic which we, teachers, must cultivate in ourselves, and it is an important one. I have insisted that we should do our best to educate ourselves into being deft players as well as analytical teachers, but our efforts will after all be foredoomed to failure, if we expect our pupils *in cold blood* to give such truly exhausting attention as I have proved to be imperatively necessary. Such attention cannot be given in response to mere cold reasoning by itself, however logical; there must be a stronger motive force than this; there must be an *emotional* driving force to enable us to give this required attention — we must act under the stress of Feeling or Emotion; in short we must be prompted by ENTHUSIASM.

Plainly, the teacher cannot hope in the least to stimulate his pupils to do real, honest work, unless he, the teacher himself, shows that the work *matters to him,* in fact, that it is a matter of life-and-death to him, whether his pupil

does succeed or not, and whether the piece discussed is rendered adequately or not.

Imagination, hard work, yes, they are the fuel, but Enthusiasm is the spark which makes the whole leap into flame.

But some will object, that this is useless talk, that enthusiasm is purely a personal characteristic, and that we are either *made* that way, or are not. . . . Well, one must concede that there is some truth in this. But, on the other hand, if we try to recognise the fact that we shall be but miserably ineffective teachers unless we do summon up some real interest in our work, it will at least make us try better than before.

Again, the very fact of our thus trying to attend better and more minutely will, in its turn, inevitably lead to our finding it more and more easy to do so, since the exercise of a faculty always increases its efficacy; and in the end we may realise that it *really is worth while* trying to help and improve others. . . . And our enthusiasm in our work will assuredly grow, when we see better and better fruits accrue from our better efforts.

The attempt to do work without giving one's whole mind to it, is indeed a very Hell upon earth, and *vice versa*, there is no finer Heaven, there is nothing more stimulating, than just this feeling, that our whole life is in our work, and that evidently *we are of use to our fellows.*

Bad and good teaching.

I have dwelt upon the urgent necessity of the teacher using his brains all the time; let us next consider *how* he must use them. Just as important as actually giving our mind to our work, is it, that we apply ourselves in the right way. It is not enough to be thoroughly anxious to help our pupil; our hard trying will after all end but in sore

disappointment unless we know *what* help to give and *how* to give it.

Here we are face to face with one of the most subtle and yet most radical of the distinctions between good teaching and bad — one of the most radical distinctions between the work of the inexperienced or foolish teacher, young or old, and that of a real teacher, rich in correctly assimilated experience. As I have said before: the bad teacher simply tries to make the pupil *do things* — "things," points, effects which the teacher feels are necessary; whereas the good teacher tries to make the pupil see and *think things*, so that, seeing their purpose, he can apply them by his own choice. To be more explicit, simply to make the pupil carry out the details of expression and interpretation which seem desirable to you at the moment, only serves to convert your pupil into an automaton, an automaton responsive to *your* thoughts instead of his *own* — a Trilby to your Svengalism. This is in fact sheer, miserable "cramming." Such cramming can have no abiding influence whatever on the pupil, for you are not in the least *educating* him — not in the least training his mind. It is doubtful, indeed, whether you will obtain from him, in that way, even one satisfactory performance. No, the only way to establish any abiding improvement in your pupil, and also the only way to obtain, immediately, a vivid performance, is patiently and ceaselessly to insist on the pupil himself always using his own ears (upon the actual sounds, and upon the sounds that *should* be), his own judgement, his own reason and his own feeling; and this, not merely "in a general sort of way," but for every note, intimately, so that the musical picture, as a *whole*, may be successful.

Cramming v. real teaching.

This does not imply less attention on your part as teacher;

on the contrary, it implies far greater attention; for you have to be as it were a vigilant policeman, constantly on the alert, seeing to it that your pupil *keeps his mind on his work* all the time, and does play every note as it should be played. Instead of acting as a bad orchestral conductor, you must act like a good conductor at rehearsal, you must explain to your pupil the most intimate details of structure and of feeling, so that he may musically be able to see and feel rightly, and may therefore play rightly *because of thus seeing and feeling.*[1]

In short, instead of the pupil being made merely to carry into effect the means of expression dictated by you, he must be made to use *his own musical imagination* and judgement all the time, and also, what is equally important, his physical judgement in connection with the instrument he is using — as Pianist he must be using his sense of key-resistance, etc., all the time.

You must insist on his doing this all the time he is in your presence, and you must try to induce him to do so all the time you are absent.

To render a pupil "musical."

A pupil generally plays badly, just because neither of these things are done — unless, of course, he has not mastered the right ways of Technique itself, in which case he will play badly for the simple reason *that he is unable to express what he does feel and think.* But indeed you will often find, that the moment you really succeed in making a pupil

Bad and good conducting.

[1] The difference between a good and bad orchestral conductor depends on the same laws: the bad conductor treats his men like machines — tries to play on them, whereas the really great conductor tries to make his men into intelligent artists, each one of them, tries to make them see the music, and insists on their using their own musical feeling — in response to his, it is true, but not in mechanical obedience to his orders, or bandmasterly directions.

attend musically and physically, that moment all his playing becomes infinitely more musical.[1] Much that seemed hopelessly wrong from the very foundations upwards, at once becomes better, and often to a quite surprising extent; and a pupil who perhaps seemed "hopelessly unmusical" gradually seems to become endowed with quite musical instincts!

Teaching v. cramming again.

Before going any further, I must try to make this difference still clearer — the difference between Teaching and Cramming. I recur again and again to this point, and urge upon my Teacher-students that we must do real teaching and not mere illusive "cramming," and yet I find that the temptation to act merely the SVENGALI tends to master us, unless we constantly resist it. Indeed even the best of us are often enough on the verge of falling into this trap, ever ready for us. But remember, the moment we give way, that moment we cease to be real teachers or educationists.

It is difficult to resist this temptation, and always carefully to draw the line between merely *conducting* a performance of our own through our pupil's fingers and correctly teaching him by prompting him to play by his own initiative, helped by our constant, careful analysis of Shape and Feeling, and by example when desirable.

The temptation is of course all the greater, when dealing with exceedingly un-alert pupils, so-called "un-musical" ones. This teaching-principle, however, applies everywhere. Always try to avoid making the pupils "do," always try to make them *think*. Again, in thus honestly trying to help your pupils in better fashion, and really trying to make them use their own brains, you are after all only *scolding and finding fault*, and are not really teaching,

Make sure of your diagnosis.

[1] By "physically" is here meant the use of one's outer ear, and one's muscular sense — with regard to key-resistance, etc.

unless — and that is the crux of the thing — unless you properly diagnose and make clear the true *cause* of each fault.[1]

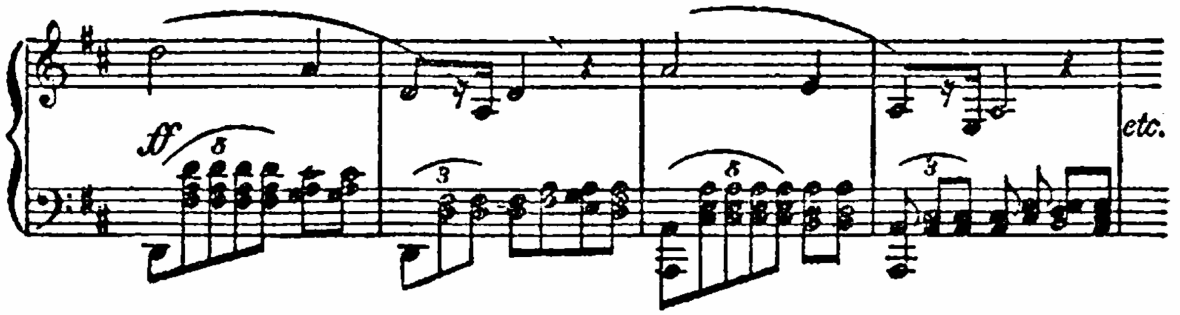
And here we dare not be careless. It behoves us not to accept too hurriedly the first explanation that offers, but always to make sure that we have seen the true cause, the ultimate cause of the pupil's going astray, for while there may be many things that *seem* to be the cause, we may yet fail to correct the pupil owing to our wrong diagnosis.

But all such generalities are not really helpful, since the unanalytical person cannot apply them.

Concrete cases.

Let us therefore take a concrete example. Say, a pupil plays a passage unrhythmically, such a very ordinary fault as the following one for instance, in Chopin's Polonaise in A:

EXAMPLE 3.



— the left hand is here often played as a quintuplet instead of in the proper Polonaise-rhythm. It was thus misplayed only the other day by a pupil, and as a number of listeners

[1] Let me reiterate it, the radical difference between real teaching and useless cramming is that in cramming you make the pupil parrot your own thoughts more or less unintelligently, whereas, in really teaching, you not only point out to the pupil *where* he is wrong and what the right *effects* should be, but always point out also the cause, *the why and wherefore* of all faults, and hence the means of their immediate correction; and you thus stimulate the pupil to use his own judgement and feeling all the time — musically and technically.

were in the room (some of them teachers of some experience) I thought I would ask these to explain the fault. Here are some of the answers:

"Sounds sloppy" — "must be played with more spirit," — which was true enough, but was no explanation of the fault, — any more than were the following ones:

"Not enough accent in the right hand!"

"Not enough accent in the left hand!"

"Tone too much the same in both hands!" (True enough, subsidiarily.)

"Tone too heavy in left hand!" (Also true.)

"It is clumsy — holds herself too stiffly."

"Plays with too much arm-weight." (They thought that would please me!) But the pupil continued to play her quintuplet in the left hand. Then they got warmer:

"Does not play rhythmically."

"Left hand is not in time."

"Does not hold the first quaver long enough" (perfectly true, of course).

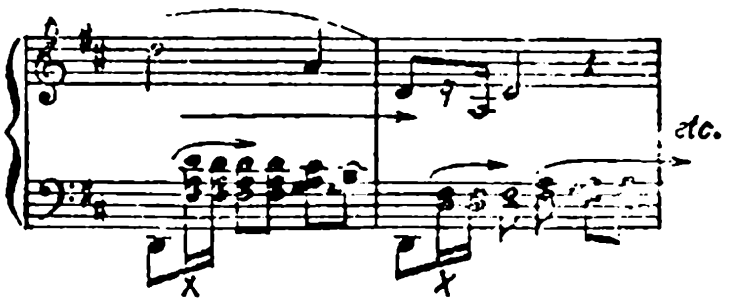
"Plays the two semiquavers *too soon*."

Nevertheless, *none* of these answers (not even the later ones) formed any true correction or analysis of the *cause* of the fault. None went to the root of the matter. True, the *result* of the fault was plain enough all the time — its ill-effect, and in the end the unmusical result was also correctly enough located. But the pupil was not told *how the fault had arisen*, nor *how* to correct it. . . . Hence, none of these tentative "corrections" formed any real teaching of the pupil.

How to correct inaccuracy of time-details.

The only possible direction to give to her, the only possible *real teaching* of this pupil, here, was simply to point out, that she *had failed to attend to time at that particular spot*, and had therefore omitted to *notice* where (in Time) the first of those two semiquavers *should occur:*

EXAMPLE 4.



It sufficed to point out to her this lapse of Time-attention, and of course the correction was instantaneously accomplished. It was now a true correction, it will be noticed, because the pupil herself was made to *think* rightly, was made to use her own judgement in the matter — for she was shown where her own Time-attention had been slack and was shown the consequences of such slackness. Therefore, it was true teaching; for she had been shown not only *how* to correct this particular fault, but, if she tried to profit by this lesson, she had the opportunity of *improving herself abidingly*, she had learnt something that might last her lifetime.

Playing out of time means lack of attention.

Believe me, no one ever plays "out of time" if he really *attends* to Time. The fault is that pupils *do not attend*, nay, even find it impossible to attend — but only because they have not learnt to do so. It is precisely such attention which you have to teach them, every pupil you have, and all the time.[1]

Uselessness of the metronome, as a time-teacher.

[1] You see, therefore, how useless it is to hope to teach your pupils a sense of Time and Rhythm by merely beating time to their performances, or making them listen to *your* exhibition of a Time-sense. True, the force of example may have some little effect, and your pupils *may*

To take other and opposite instances, of technical shortcomings:

Faults arising from bad touch habits.

A comparatively musical pupil, who is obviously trying hard to play a *cantabile* passage most soulfully and sympathetically, fails sadly, however, owing to bad touch-habits. Here it is of no use telling her to "sing the passage better," or to "play it more sympathetically." The only way to help her is to explain to her *how* to produce the singing effect easily and therefore successfully, i. e., by arm-lapse, flat finger, and careful attention to the necessary *crescendo* of speed during key-descent, and accurate "aiming" of the key-motion, etc.

Or, in a related case, a pupil may play her *passages* "stickily" or unevenly; here again, it is useless merely to call attention to these defects — probably she notices them (to her sorrow) as much as you do. The only true correction

play tolerably in time while you are "pumping" away, or counting or shouting; but the moment they are left alone — as they have to be for most of their playing-time — they play just as badly as before, since you have not told them *how* to help themselves. The only way to teach them is unremittingly to insist on their attending to their own sense of Time-throb or sense of Rhythm while you have the chance. Do not allow their rhythmical attention to flag for a moment while they are with you. Moreover, you, yourself, will have to be alert all the time, else your own Imitative-sense will cause you unconsciously to follow their lax pulse-feeling, and you, yourself, being misled, will fail to notice their aberrations from Time-continuity. You must be alert all the while so that your own Time-sense may remain unshaken, and so that you may compare your pupils' doings (in this respect) with what you feel is imperative.

Hence, also, you realise the folly of imagining that a Metronome can serve as a Time-teacher. You see, the pupil has to learn to play to a pulse-throb of his own making all the while; it is therefore of very little use indeed learning to pay obedience to an outside, machine-made Pulse-throb. And in any case, a Metronome is apt to kill the finer Time-sense implied by Rubato. But more about this anon.

is to show her the *cause* of her defects — probably a forearm held stiffly, rotarily, and the rotary exertions not adjusted accurately to each finger, or maybe, complete ignorance as to the evil effects of "key-bedding." Or, it may even be a case of one actually mistaught technically, a victim for instance of the doctrine of "holding the knuckles in" — the doctrine which has done such an inconceivable amount of mischief at so many of our schools for girls, and music schools here and elsewhere. In such case, it is of no use saying "*you must hold the knuckles up*" — that would only do harm. You must show and make clear, that if the finger is properly exerted and the arm is not forced down, the knuckles will then automatically assume their natural level position; and you must demonstrate that it is just as impossible to use one's fingers freely and easily at the Piano under such absurdly unnatural and helpless conditions, as it would be to take a walk with one's legs doubled up at the knee — in the crouching position assumed for a certain kind of comic race.

Correction of incorrect tempi.

As two final instances: when a slow movement is played *too slowly*, do not say "play quicker"; instead, try to make the pupil *think* the music in *longer phrases*. Again, if a quick movement is played *too fast*, you will only hamper yourself, or your pupil, by telling him to "try to make the piece go slower"; instead, here draw attention to the *in-between beats*, or sub-divisions of these beats, and the result is immediately attained and with certainty.

The causes of faults must always be made clear.

No, teaching does not consist in merely pointing out the existence of faults — not now-a-days — but in our always making clear the *cause* of each fault, and the direct means of its correction.[1]

[1] In other words: it is not enough to notice the *nature* of each fault and to point this out to the pupil, you must correctly diagnose the *cause* of each fault and explain that to the pupil.

You have to teach people to attend, to analyse, to *notice* on their own account — to notice and observe Time, and also everything else, Tone and Duration, *how* they should be, and also, *how they really appear;* and you also have to teach people *how* to obtain the required tonal effects from their instrument.

To teach people *how to attend* and *how to do,* — how to *feel* and *perceive,* that alone is real teaching, and it is a proud thing to be engaged upon. It is never "hack-work" — if you insist thus on really teaching people how to think, and do not try to make them use their fingers in response merely to *your* musical wishes. Only by bearing these things in mind can you avoid being a "crammer," and can you attain to being a true *educationist.*

True education.